

PART 10: QUESTION AND ANSWERS



Note:

Following answers are modified transcript and may not be 100% representative of What Ustadh Noman Ali Khan said during the lecture. For further detail and exact wording, refer to Australian Islamic Library's website for accessing the complete lecture series or listening to its audios.

GUIDELINES FOR SISTERS

Q. WHAT IS YOUR OPINION ABOUT SISTERS SHARING THEIR KNOWLEDGE IN THE MASJID VICINITY, GIVING A TALK LIKE TODAY'S? CAN WOMEN TAKE A LEAD IN DOING WORK FOR THE SAKE OF ALLAH AND NOT BE PREVENTED FROM THAT?

If you have got something productive and positive to do, do it. Nobody is stopping you. Sisters should do their own programmes. I don't see anything wrong with that. I actually encourage it. I feel we should have our sisters as public role-models for our young girls, because there are more than

enough Disney role-models for them.

Honestly, I was at a programme where Irshaad Banji was speaking. She claims to be a Muslim. Allah knows what is in her heart but from her actions and speech it is obvious that it is not conventional Islam. But you know after she spoke, a couple of little girls in Hijab went over to her to get her autograph. You know why? Because she is apparently a Muslim and she's a public figure, so she must be a role-model. That was disturbing. We need to have role-models for our girls and we need to develop strong tarbiyah for our daughters at home. So that when they come out of home and go to college or to wherever they are going to go in their lives, they guard their haya and they know how to be strong and confident women.

Our deen does not want our women to be not in the workplace or whatever. Musa (a.s) saw a couple of girls that were herding sheep - but they knew how to handle themselves. They waited for the men to finish as they didn't want to mix with them inappropriately and get pushed and shoved. Then, when Musa (a.s) went up to them to ask them, 'What is your problem? Why are you wrestling with these sheep?' They didn't go like, 'Hee hee, astaghfirullah'. They didn't do that. They talked to him straight and they were tough. Remember, Musa (a.s) was a big man and they both said, 'We cannot feed our sheep until those men are done

and, by the way, our dad is a big sheikh!' So they were tough and they were out in the workplace, as mentioned in Surah Al-Qasas.

I recently met sheikh Akram Nadvi from Oxford. He has written a comprehensive book on the female collectors of hadith. It's called Al-Muhadithat. About three thousand women in the history of Islam that were muhadithat including some of the teachers of Imam Bukhari (rahimullah), Imam Muslim (rahimullah) and so on. He has compiled an entire composite list of these three thousand women that are the mothers of hadith study.

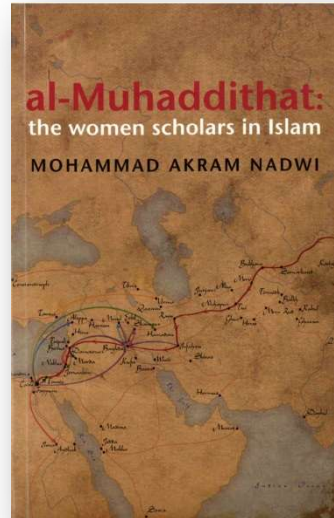


Figure 1: Title of the book Al-Mouhaddithat by Sheikh Akram Nadvi

It all proves one point - the Islamic scholarship is not something that was owned by men. Women were equally, if not even more, involved in it. This has always been the case. That is our tradition. But it is so very easy for us to have amnesia of our own history, subhanAllah!

PURITY OF INTENTIONS

Q. HOW SHOULD ONE DEAL WITH SINCERITY IN PUBLIC

SPEAKING?

You have to know yourself. You have to know why you are speaking. I accept that speaking can, many a times, turn into a performance. It can also turn into theatrics if you are not clear about who you are and why you are doing it. My personal remedy for this is based on a few things which are my own fixes for my sincerity:

1. I have close friends who have known me before I was known to people as I am today. They are not impressed with me and never will be. They know me for who I am. Those are some real friends. They are not my friends because I am a public figure. They are my friends because I played basketball with them back in the days and they can scold me. Such real friends keep us all in check. They keep us human. They do not sit next to you and say brother Nouman, I have a question. They do not do that. They directly say what they want to say and their advice carries a lot of weight.
2. The second thing is to have around you elders who are not impressed with you for your stature or your impressive speech or anything else. They too keep us in check and let us maintain our factor of humility. That is why our relationship with our parents

is so very important. It keeps us from being arrogant. As you get older, you will get older with what your mother and father have to say and you'll have to be patient. This is what keeps you humble. More than a shiekh, you need your parents. Go to your parents, sit with them, let your mum yell at you, let her tell how silly you look in your choice of clothing or how your hijab is not correctly done or whatever they want. Sit there and be quiet. That is a humbleness check. I am not saying my mum does that - she is a really nice - but it is really good to have sound relationship with your parents. So after you give a speech, go hang out with your mum or dad.

3. The final fix for me, personally, is itekalf (seclusion). You have to go to and find a place where nobody knows you. Don't give a talk when doing itekalf, don't give a halaqah, just go and be quiet. My such itekalf this year was hajj. No talks, no pictures, no meetings, nothing. I am just there to make hajj, that's it; not there to give speech. All I wanted was to disappear. I wanted to blend and that's all I wanted. And for da'ees especially, my advice is to do itekalf and go to umrah, but don't do that with the group, if possible. Don't take the pictures and post them on facebook straight away. Go by

yourself, it's your little secret between you and Allah.

WHICH ORGANIZATION TO WORK FOR

Q: WHAT IS YOUR OPINION ABOUT WORKING WITH THE TABLIGHI JAMAAT?

First of all, I respect all movements and jamaats and for the Tablighi Jamaat, I have tremendous respect. I also believe that going in the path of Allah takes different shapes and forms and that's one of such paths and ways of striving.

The whole point of the lecture series (on which this book is formed) was to encourage Muslim youth to be involved in at least something. The deen requires us to be concerned with more than just ourselves. It requires us to be concerned with others as well - in whatever capacity we can. So, inshaAllah, in whatever way that manifests itself, I would highly encourage you to get involved.

ADVICE FOR TEACHERS

Q. HOW DO I BALANCE KEEPING MY FOLLOWERS/STUDENTS DISCIPLINED WHILE APPLYING ALL THE NICE LEADERSHIP ADVICES YOU GAVE?

Some of the advices are universal and can be applied to the teacher-student relationship, but some of them don't.

The leadership advice is highly relevant to you as a teacher to apply, including the ability to be patient with students, working with them compassionately and finding the balance between courtesy and authority. This is because a leader at the end of the day does enjoy an authority. However, this authority has to be exercised in such a way that it does not feel unjustly authoritative.

The use of the word “ameer” in Arabic is very instructive in this regard. There are three words for this: “amir”, “ammar” and “ameer”.

- Amir is someone who gives commands to you.
- Ammar is someone who keeps telling what to do, and
- Ameer is someone who doesn't tell what to do, but people obey him anyway. It is an adjective which means they are in a position of authority but they don't have to open their mouth for people to obey them. This is what a real ameer is.

So by the linguistic definition, ameer means someone who doesn't give a lot of instructions but is followed anyway because of the respect he enjoys for his leadership. But developing that relationship of respect takes time. We should try to strike a balance between “becoming too lenient and friendly with students” and at the same time not “becoming

too harsh with them" either. There is a very thin line between these two aspects.

DO THE DAWAH WITH WISDOM

Q. WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO TALK TO OR ADVISE SOMEONE WHO MAY TAKE YOUR WORDS AS AN ATTACK ON THEIR BELIEFS AND WAYS? IS DUA THE BEST OPTION THEN TO HELP THEM OUT?

Telling somebody about what wrong they are doing, especially if it is to some family members, you have to be direct but subtle. You have to be honestly tactful. It is undeniable reality that the truth does hurt in most cases. When you try to correct someone, people do get offended many a times.

Who could be nicer human being on the face of this earth than the Prophet ﷺ. Even his own family was extremely offended when he presented Islam to them. It just comes with telling the truth. People's feelings are hurt and they can get offended by what you have to say. But, in doing so, you should always maintain a respectful posture and avoid sayings things over and over again. Find a good time to say it. If it works out, it works out; if it doesn't, just let it go. At times, it happens that when we say something to somebody, they do not respond right away or respond in a negative way. But what we don't realize in such situations is that the sincerely offered words do get stuck in their minds and it takes them a year, six months or

whatever and then those same words that you said to them may click. Everybody works on their own clock. So you do whatever best you can do. Don't worry about changing people because that comes from Allah's will.

"Indeed you will not be able to guide whom you wish, but Allah guides those whom He will and He knows best those who receive guidance." (Al-Qur'an 28:56 Surah al-Qasas)

"Invite (all) to the Way of your Rabb (Cherisher and Sustainer) with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for your Rabb knows best, who have strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance." (16:125)

Q. IF YOU KNOW YOUR FAMILY IS DOING SOMETHING WRONG, HOW IMPORTANT IS IT TO SAY THE TRUTH; OR SHOULD YOU KEEP YOUR SILENCE FOR THE SAKE OF FAMILY?

There is no such thing as keeping the family together by compromising on the truth. It's a myth. Actually speaking the truth is not going to destroy your family, unless it is a traumatic secret that the family is holding. In that case, one should better see a counsellor.

But if it is like your dad is into a haraam business and after a period of thinking and reflection, you manage to say one day, 'Dad isn't that a little haraam?', you may get yelled at, but

say it. At least it'll be off your chest. Say, 'Dad, you've got a lotto machine in the gas station, isn't that a little problematic? I mean I feel bad about it.' Or, 'You know we're eating halaal chicken from haraam money.' Slip it in get yelled at, slip it in again. Do not argue about it with your parents but you should speak the truth and take a beating, and speak the truth again. That's the formulae.

DEALING WITH NAJWA

Q. WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE MSA LEADERS WHO ARE FACING BAD NAJWA IN THEIR SHURA OR FACING DIFFERING OPINIONS? HOW WOULD YOU DEAL WITH A SHURA PERSON WHO DOES NOTHING YOU ASK HIM TO DO?

Make them read this book or watch the video series on which it is based. Other than that, you cannot do much but be patient because these kinds of problems do exist. You just have to work through them.

It is important to choose your words carefully. Incorrectly chosen words can, not only, seriously destroy your working and personal relationships, but also put the progress towards cause in a serious jeopardy. It may not be a very good idea to tell them: 'I heard a lecture that this is najwa and according to Sura Maida people of Najwa burn in hell'. Rather, you have to be more tactful, respectful, and polite. If people within organisations talk to each other in this way then this becomes

personal, which is not encouraged at all. Wherever possible, we should try to depersonalize the message to avoid people getting defensive. For example, if you want to give some clear message to person not standing up to responsibilities, rather than saying "YOU need to listen to this", you can say, "We all need to listen to this". Criticisms, if not done in a proper manner, can become personal very quickly and turn ugly losing its core objective.

A LITMUS TEST FOR MODESTY

Q. HOW CAN WE BALANCE MIX-GENDER MSA AND NOT COMPROMISE OUR MODESTY AND NOT BE SHAMELESS?

I am going to do a whole programme on it called 'shame'. It is about how the Quran talks about shame and where can it get compromised for Muslim youth who are apparently very religious and for those that are not so religious. More often than not, this would be a set of moral stances rather than fatwas. If you understand the moral guidelines and you can stick to them, you will be fine. But if you do not understand them, you may face problems.

As a rule of thumb, if you are explaining something to opposite gender or are engaged in a conversation, you should hold yourself up in a way that is honourable and respectful. Someone watching you from somewhere should not have any opportunity to misinterpret it. If it can be misinterpreted,

then you should not be in that situation. That is a kind of a litmus test that I suggest to people.

As far as conversations are concerned, if you are completely comfortable with having a conversation with a non-mahram in the exact same way as if your father was standing there and your tone wouldn't be any different and your body language or posture wouldn't be any different, the words you use wouldn't be any different, then go ahead. But if you think that your dad, your brother or your husband or grandfather or even if I am standing there and your tone, the way you carry yourself would get impacted, even a little bit, then you probably should not be in that conversation. These are good litmus tests.

It is not a fatwa but a simple litmus test for a common person. If you think you are not doing anything wrong, then why are you changing your behaviour when your dad is there? If it is not wrong, then why are you so ashamed of it? Why are you shocked by it? If anything is going wrong, your inner conscious will raise tell you about this when you do the litmus test.

MANAGING STRESS WHILE DOING ISLAMIC WORK

Q. AS A LEADER, HOW DO YOU OVERCOME THE STRESS OF YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES IN ORDER TO LEAD AN ORGANISATION (EFFECTIVELY)?

I get engaged in games, or play with my children, or sleep. When I wake up, I can deal with it again. We are all humans. We need a release. It may be basketball, or a punching bag at home and so on. For many people, it is dua or qiyam ul lail. Those are great, but if you are finding it difficult to do that regularly, then find some other healthy energy release.

But do not over-think about your role either. We should be concerned about our role without being paralysed by its stature or extent. Life is about moving on. Everybody has got problems and we all have a to-do list. If you take a piece of paper now and you make a list of things to do, it will probably be a very long one. And if you start thinking about getting all those things done, you may feel there is so much you have not got done. Or if you make a list of things you wanted to learn that you haven't learnt, you would get depressed. You just have to take one day a time and one problem at a time and not look at the whole list of things all the time.

What advice do the teachers give to kids doing hifz (memorization) of the whole Quran? They start with Juz Amma (30th Juz of Quran)! They start with two pages a day. The teachers say to their students, "don't worry about what you haven't done, worry about what you have done". Worry about the task at hand and not about all the other things, otherwise you'll get overwhelmed and you would not be able

to carry on.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND THE WORK OF DEEN

Q. WHEN WE SERVE A COMMUNITY AT LARGE FOR THE SAKE OF ALLAH, HOW TO HAVE A LOT OF SABR TO GRADUATE TO THE NEXT LEVEL? INDIVIDUALLY, HOW CAN WE HAVE FOCUS AND DEVELOP OUR DEEN ESPECIALLY WHEN WE SEE THAT WE ARE STRUGGLING WITH OUR WORK-LIFE BALANCE?

I personally believe that balance in the life of a Muslim comes from a familiarity and a regular study of the Quran; Quranic studies shouldn't just be an academic exercise. This is where the balance comes from. This book balances all of our priorities. It does not let you forget your obligations to Allah and to your community and keeps you spiritually under check.

I feel that the biggest crisis of the Muslim Ummah today is that we, at the communal level, are distant from the Quran. We don't have a personal relationship with it.

That is why I feel the talk I gave yesterday is very important. I usually do not feel any of my talks are too important, but I feel that one was. This was because I gave it with my own kids in mind trying to ponder over "How can I educate my kids with the Quran? How can I get them to have a deep, personal connection with the Quran? How are they going to do that?" This is what inspired that lecture.

Q. CAN I JUST SERVE MY PARENTS AND SPEND A LIFE IN SOLITARY AFFAIRS WITH JUST MY IMMEDIATE FAMILY AND RELATIVES?

Sure, why not? If you just want to work on your family and it keeps your hands full, then do not volunteer at the masjid or with an organization; just serve your parents and family while performing your obligatory duties.

APPENDIX A: LIST OF MAJOR SINS



(70 major sins, as compiled by Imam Shams ud Din Dhahabi)

VIOLATION OF COMMANDS OF ALLAH REGARDING THE MATTERS OF RELIGION AND PERSONAL OBLIGATIONS

1. Ascribing Associates To Allah, The Most High (Shirk)
2. Not Performing the Prayer
3. Breaking One's Fast During Ramadan Without an Excuse
4. Not Performing the Hajj When Able to
5. The Consumption of Haram
6. Not Freeing Oneself of All Traces of Urine
7. Suicide
8. Breach of Faith
9. Disbelieving in Destiny
10. Dragging the Hem of One's Garment Out of Conceit
11. Picture-making (or statue-making)

12. Slaughtering in Other Than Allah's Name
13. Men Wearing Silk or Gold
14. Feeling Secure From Allah's Devising
15. Despairing of the Mercy of Allah and Losing of Hope
16. Forgoing the Congregational Prayer to Pray Alone
Without A Legal Excuse
17. Constantly Missing the Friday and Congregational
Prayer Without A Valid Excuse

**VIOLATION OF COMMANDS OF ALLAH THAT RESULT IN
VIOLATION OF THE RIGHTS OF OTHER HUMAN BEINGS**

18. Killing A Human Being (except for the reasons
permitted by the Shariah, e.g. as a legal punishment
from Islamic government etc.)
19. Sorcery
20. Not Paying Zakat (this act results in the poor not being
given their share from the wealth of the wealthy)
21. Showing Disrespect to One's Parents
22. Severing the Ties of One's Relatives
23. Adultery
24. Sodomy
25. Accepting Usurious Gain
26. Wrongly consuming an Orphan's Property
27. Lying About the Prophet
28. Fleeing From the Battlefield

29. The Leader Who Misleads His Followers, the Tyrant and the Oppressor
30. Arrogance, Pride, Conceit, Vanity and Haughtiness
31. Bearing False Witness
32. Drinking Alcohol
33. Gambling (Qimar)
34. Accusing a Woman of Adultery
35. Misappropriating Spoils of War, Muslim Funds or Zakat
36. Theft
37. Highwaymen Who Menace the Road
38. The Engulfing Oath
39. Taking People's Property Through Falsehood
40. Collecting Taxes unlawfully
41. Telling Lies
42. The Dishonest Judge
43. Bribery
44. Women Imitating Men and Vice Versa
45. The Pimp and the One Who Permits His Wife To Fornicate
46. Marrying Solely to Return to the Previous Husband
47. Showing off in Good Work
48. Learning Sacred Knowledge for the Sake of this World or Concealing It
49. Reminding Recipients of One's Charity to Them
50. Listening to the People's Private Conversations
51. The Talebearer Who Stirs Up Enmity Between People

52. Cursing Others
53. Breaking One's Promise or Pledge
54. Believing Fortune-tellers and Astrologers
55. A Wife's Rebellion Against Her Husband
56. Loudly Lamenting For the Dead or When Afflicted With
an Adversity
57. Excess Against Others
58. Overburdening and Arrogance Against Others
59. Hurting One's Neighbour
60. Hurting or Reviling Muslims
61. Harming the Servants of Allah
62. Fleeing of the Slave
63. Falsely Claiming Someone is One's Father
64. Arguing, Picking Apart Another's Words, and
Quarrelling
65. Withholding Excess Water From Others
66. Stinting When Weighing or Measuring Out Goods and
Similar Merchandise
67. Bringing Loss to the Bequest
68. Deception and Evil Schemes
69. Spying on the Muslims and Revealing Their
Weaknesses
70. Disparaging the Companions of the Prophet